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# Mission Work in Alberta

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## THE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ALBERTA.

Alberta is one vast, sloping plateau; lying on the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains, sloping down, as it spreads north and east, from a mean altitude of 4,000 to 2,000 feet above sea-level. This vast extent of country, up to 1882, had been simply called "a part of the North West Territories." In 1883, Lord Lorne and Her Royal Highness, Princess Louise, visited the West, just after the opening of the C.P.R., and, in honor of the visit, the territory lying next the Rocky Mountains was called Alberta. In the year 1905, it was created a Province, and ever since has enjoyed the full privileges of self-government.

This Foothill Province has wonderful dimensions. Its length is approximately 750 miles, its maximum breadth 400 miles, and its total area 253,540 square miles. It is estimated that there are 160,775,200 acres of arable land in Alberta. Of this enormous extent of country, only one per cent. of the acreage is under cultivation at this present time. Great Britain and Ireland could be laid down twice in Alberta, and then 11,000 square miles of the Prairie Province would not be covered. The whole Empire of Germany could be spread out on this Foothill division, and there would be just 45,000 square miles of Alberta left uncovered. If this Province were as densely populated as is Great Britain to-day, the whole population of the United States, 90,000,000 of people, could be domiciled in this one country, called Alberta.

The climate may be characterized as dry and clear, the sun shining most of the year round. May, June and July are usually the wet months of the year. The average annual

It is about 15.4 inches. The winter is short—about three months—and is usually bright, and, but for occasional dips of the thermometer, quite mild and enjoyable. "The Chinooks,"—the warm winds that filter through the Rocky Mountains from the sea, will sometimes cause a rise in temperature of 60 degrees within a few hours. The climate makes the country, and the Chinook, stealing



A Missionary Making his Rounds

softly over the lands as far north as the Peace River district, bearing beneficent moisture on its wings, and pregnant with potential harvests, makes the climate. Not only has Alberta great wheat fields, but she has also wonderful mineral deposits. The whole country seems to be underlaid with coal, both lignite and anthracite being found.

in abundance. Truly Alberta is a double-decked Province, wheat above and coal below. Natural gas is found in abundance, several cities, such as Medicine Hat, Bow Island and Calgary, utilizing it as an illuminant. Oil experts prophesy that Alberta will one day be one of the richest oil fields in the world. In several places in the North, it is reported to have been discovered in abundance. A gigantic bed of asphalt has been reported as lying contiguous to the Athabasca River, also a very extensive bed of salt, fifty feet in thickness, near Fort Smith, on the northern frontier. There is also timber in abundance on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, and although not attaining any very great size yet, it has proved itself to be very valuable.

This, in short, gives but an imperfect resume of the wonderful material possibilities of this Foothill Province. Here lie millions and millions of acres of the finest soil in the world, just awaiting the farmer and his plow, in order to blossom into wheatfields that will feed the whole world. Here lies, embedded on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, coal sufficient to supply the world with fuel for the coming centuries, just awaiting the dynamite and pick of the miner. What a land God has given to Canadians! What wonderful, unthinkable possibilities lie therein!

### THE POPULATION OF ALBERTA.

Ten years ago a careful computation assigned to that part of the North West Territories, now called Alberta, a population of 73,022 individuals. The census returns of 1911 gave the Prairie Province a total population of 372,919 souls. Last year about 50,000 people settled in Alberta. The applicants for free land in Alberta compose a most cosmopolitan crowd. In the year 1911, in the 19,000 applicants for homesteads, 27 nationalities were represented. Every British colony of any size or importance sent applicants.



Going to Church

Austria, Hungary, Russia, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Holland, Denmark, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Roumania, Italy, Iceland, China, Persia, Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Japan, Greece, all sent their representatives to the lands of Alberta. No country in the world, however, is sending us such a large number of settlers as is the United States. From almost every state in the Union they are coming, until it is estimated that 60 per cent. of the whole rural population of the Province has come from south of the border. There is a self-reliance, and an energy, about the American that usually makes him a first class farmer. From England, Ireland and Scotland they are coming in large numbers, bringing a solidity and strength which are exceedingly essential to the building up of a strong, law-abiding nation. The Swedes and Norwegians are a fine type physically, and are noted for their quiet habits and domesticity. The Russians are strong, stern, plodding people, who are not daunted by reverses, nor ever elated by success. The Germans are a thrifty people, and have the knack of making the soil produce rather more than it does in any other hands. Intellectually, they rank with the Canadians, Americans and Britishers. This, then, gives a bird's-eye view of the peoples who are flocking into this vast West, and settling down together on the prairies, and it is out of this material that we have to build up a great Canadian nation. They are not the weaklings or the ne'er-do-weels of any nation that are coming, but the strong, the virile, the daring, who are willing to risk and do, and dare, for themselves and their families. What a wonderful opportunity lies before us in nation building.

### **THE PROBLEM OF ALBERTA.**

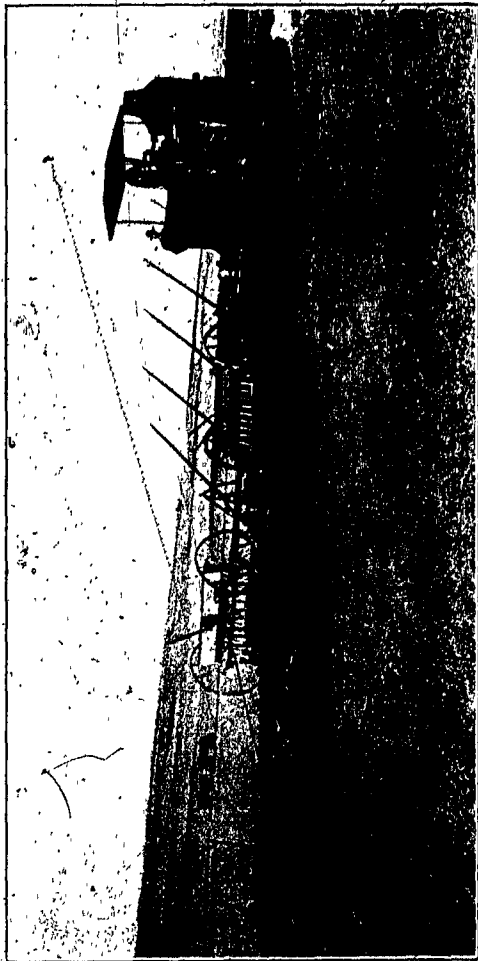
The great problem of the West is how are we going to weld into one great nationality all these diverse elements that are flocking into this Western land? How are we to make out of these divergent, heterogeneous masses,



The Old Way



The Old Way



The New Way

who are settling down in this sunny Province, a great, God-fearing people, established in righteousness, whose God is the Lord? That is our problem. There is but one answer. It must be done through the earnest, persistent, faithful, preaching and teaching, and living, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Nothing else can do it. This is the task of the churches of to-day. Looking then at the problem from the church viewpoint, a few special cases may be cited.

In Southern Alberta we have our most dangerous and insidious foreigners in the persons of the Mormons. About 20,000 of these people are settled in that locality. They are slowly, but surely, gripping that whole south country. Farms or tracts of land offered for sale in the south, are usually purchased, either by individual Mormons, or by the Mormon Church, as an organization. Because of the fact that the Mormon Church exacts tithes, it is becoming enormously rich. "Why are these people so dangerous?" is a question frequently asked. It is easily answered. (1) Because of their Theological tenets; because of their belief in a dual God, male and female, and the peculiar bearing that the relationship has upon human life. It is the most awful mixture of heathenism, Judaism, and Christianity, that has ever been conceived by the mind of man. It is undoubtedly one of the most abominable frauds ever foisted on humanity in the name of religion. It is built upon two great pillars, shall we say two great faculties of the human personality, namely, the religious, and sexual. Their morality, or rather immorality, is the direct outcome of their religious beliefs. (2) Another reason why they are so dangerous is because of their marvellous missionary zeal. Id self-sacrifice, zeal, energy and devotion to their church, they simply put us to shame. They claim to have 3,000 missionaries in the field at the present time. Their avowed purpose is to secure the balance of power in Parliament and thus control the laws of the

land to such an extent as to legalize polygamy. At the present moment they dare not openly carry out their beliefs, but they frequently make statements publicly, to the effect that they look forward with quiet confidence to the day when they shall be able to do so without breaking the laws of the land. In all these Mormon centres we have our missionaries doing the best they can under the circumstances. In the north land our problem is of a different sort. There, we have hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of ~~people who have come from Russia, Austria and other Christian countries in Europe.~~ These people are foreign in appearance, foreign in language, and foreign in ideals. Coming from dark, down-trodden, tyranny-cursed countries in Europe, many of them are out and out Nihilists or Anarchists, and have brought to us for solution problems that have baffled the best statesmen of Europe. Many of these people are Roman Catholics, and are looked after by their own church. Many there are, perhaps about 40,000 all told, who refuse to be classed as Roman Catholics; and belong to the Independent Greek Church. Among these peoples the Presbyterian Church has been doing a great work. Many of their young men are studying in Manitoba College, with the ministry in view, and at the present time we have at work among them twenty-three missionaries preaching the Gospel to them in their own language. This is an exceedingly hopeful work, and one of great promise. There are also several colonies of Swedes, Norwegians, and Finlanders in Alberta, to whom the Presbyterian Church is ministering. The large majority of these are Lutherans in religion, but very easily drop into the Presbyterian Church when their own is not available. The Lutheran Church, as a body, has not as yet made any real systematic attempt to reach their people in this Province. Among all these Northern-Europe people there is quite a sprinkling of Atheistic Socialists, whose

main religion, or rather irreligion, is bitter opposition to all government in general, and all religion in particular. The Reformed Norwegian Church has applied for entrance to the Presbyterian ranks, and their Superintendent is now employed by our church. The German Reformed, and the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Churches in Alberta, have also applied to be taken under the Presbyterian wing. There are several colonies from Old France in the Province, and in some cases they are bitterly opposed to the Roman Catholic



A Missionary's Headquarters

Church. They are here, too, from Sunny Italy, often with no religion at all, and a bitter hatred in their hearts against the priests, and the Church as they know it.

Of course a very large proportion of the Western people belong to the Anglo-Saxon family. Many Americans have come from the Western States where religious facilities are few, and consequently they are indifferent to all religious ordinances. This is, of course, by no means true of all of them, as some of

the very best Christian men and women we have on these Western plains have come from the United States. When an American is a Christian, he is usually a force for righteousness in the community where he dwells.

The church has also to look after our fellow countrymen from the Eastern Provinces, and from across the sea. Sometimes the missionary is badly disappointed even with these. Many a man on the Western prairies will eloquently descant upon the grand and good things he used to do in the old land, but somehow it would seem as if he had dropped his religion somewhere in transit, as he has none of it out here. However, the large majority of all new comers are glad to have religious ordinances, and welcome the missionary with open arms. A very large percentage of those coming from the Eastern Provinces, and from Scotland are Presbyterians, and have to be looked after by the Presbyterian Church. This, then, is a hasty glance at the problem as looked at from the religious angle. What an opportunity for religious work here presents itself! What a privilege is ours as a church!

### THE MISSIONARIES OF ALBERTA.

We have now about 200 of them right in this one Province. The most difficult task, the church at present has before it, is how to provide a sufficient number of men of the right stamp to do this work at this important crisis in our country's history. The young men of Canada are not coming forward in anything like sufficient numbers to fill the ranks of the ministry. In the past, we have been forced to go abroad for a large percentage of our missionaries. We have recruited our depleted ranks largely from Scotland and Ireland. Many good, noble, true men have come from these grand old countries to help us in our hour of need; but they are unacquainted with our country, with our needs, with our habits, and it usually takes quite a long time to get acclimatized,

and to fall into the ways of the people. What we want, what we need, what we must have, if our work is to be kept up to anything like the standard, is a large number of our own Canadian boys, recruited for the ministry, and sent to the front to do this great work in this hour of peril.

### THE PROGRESS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN ALBERTA.

When the great veteran missionary, Dr. James Robertson, laid down his work, and Dr. Herdman took it up, in the year 1902,



A Typical Pioneer Home

there were but two Presbyteries in Alberta, viz., Edmonton and Calgary, with but twenty-five mission fields. To-day there are seven Presbyteries, and two more ought to be organized shortly, and 155 mission stations, comprising 475 preaching places. Truly, the little one has become a thousand in this western work. During the years 1910 and 1911, sixty new fields have been opened in

Alberta. In those same two years seventeen mission charges have gone up to the augmented status, and almost as many have gone to self-support. In 1902, when Dr. Herdman took the reins in Alberta, there were but seven self-supporting charges; now there are thirty. Then, there were but two augmented charges; now there are thirty-three. Then, there were but 1,694 communicants all told on all the communion roll; to-day there are over 10,000 Presbyterian communicants in Alberta. The worth of the property of the Presbyterian Church in Alberta has risen during that time from \$86,000 to over \$1,000,000. During the two years mentioned above, 41 new churches have been dedicated to the worship of God, and 17 new manises have been erected to make the missionaries comfortable. In the same two years, the Sunday Schools in Alberta have advanced 80 per cent in attendance, and 60 per cent in organizations, and over 5,000 people have united with the church. Surely this tremendous advance in the work of the Kingdom should make every person rejoice, thank God, and take courage.

### **THE OPPORTUNITY OF ALBERTA.**

The country has a certain future. It is our own country. We are responsible for its future. It is now in the making. Our Church in the early days lost heavily in the East because of neglect. We should guard against making the same blunder again. So far, we have more than held our own. Our Church has done much for the West. She must continue the good work, not for the sake of the Church, but for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Now is the time of opportunity. Ten years now of the right kind of work will mean fifty years later on. The majority of the people are comparatively new in the West. They have cut from all their old associations and in a new land they are peculiarly susceptible to the influences of either

good, or evil. When they are lonely and poor and discouraged, the missionary can often wield an influence that is never lost. When people are left without Gospel ordinances for a number of years and have become comfortable or well off, then it is ten times harder to reach them. "Now's the day and now's the hour," to save and hold for Christ this great West Land.

### **THE NEEDS OF ALBERTA.**

We need MEN of the right type for the mission fields; men of faith and zeal, with good, strong, sterling, wholesome lives, who have an evangelical, positive message for the people. Then we need MONEY, so that every minister and student and catechist may receive a proper remuneration for his services. And above all we need the fervent, believing PRAYERS of God's people. With all these combined the future is assured.